

THE
CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.

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JENNINGS AND CHAPLIN.

1831.



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THE
CHILDREN IN THE WOOD:

WITH ENGRAVINGS

BY

THOMPSON, NESBIT, S. WILLIAMS, JACKSON,
AND BRANSTON AND WRIGHT;

DRAWN BY WILLIAM HARVEY.



LONDON:

JENNINGS AND CHAPLIN.

1831.

PREFACE.

NO apology can be necessary for producing a reprint of so popular a Ballad as *The Children in the Wood*, the interest of which is destined to endure as long as pity itself, in the human, or in the Red-breast. In putting "these pretty babes" into fresh leaves, and helping to prevent such *Flowers of the Forest* from fading away, the Proprietors feel sure that they are doing a service to other "children young," by perpetuating a portion of that wholesome romance, which, like the bloom on the grape, clings with such loveliness and kindliness to the head and heart of youth. If the lover of art, in addition to the lover of nature, should derive a gratification from the reprint, through the character of the illustrations which accompany it, the highest aim will be answered—that of decking so fair a pall "with scutcheons meet and true, and handsome effigies."

The admirable Elia, in his Essays, makes mention of an old mansion-house in Norfolk, traditionally reported to have been the residence of the "cruel uncle;" and that, on a mantel, the whole story was carved in oak, "down to the Robin Red-breasts." This precious relic was afterwards removed by some "foolish rich person," to give place to one of more modern marble, of course, made "thick and slab;" and certainly the innovator deserved a souse, with his new shelf, into the Witches' Cauldron. Whether "the whole story, down to the Robin Red-breasts," cut in box, be worthy of a better fate, is now respectfully submitted. It appears, by the name, as if the story were destined to be perpetuated in its present form,—and that it could never be perfectly told, until the Babes were shewn, as Mr. HARVEY has shewn them, to be the real Children in the *Wood*.

THE
CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.

Now ponder well, you parents deare,
These wordes, which I shall write;
A doleful story you shall heare,
In time brought forth to light:

A gentleman of good account,
In Norfolke dwelt of late,
Who did in honour far surmount
Most men of his estate.

Sore sicke he was, and like to dye,
 No helpe his life could save ;
 His wife by him as sicke did lye,
 And both possest one grave.

No love between these two was lost,
 Each was to other kinde ;
 In love they liv'd, in love they dyed,
 And left two babes behinde :

The one a fine and pretty boy,
 Not passing three yeares olde ;
 'The other a girl more young than he,
 And fram'd in beautyes molde :

'The father left his little son,
 As plainly doth appeare,
 When he to perfect age should come,
 Three hundred poundes a yeare.



And to his little daughter Jane

Five hundred poundes in gold,
To be paid downe on marriage-day,
Which might not be controll'd ;

But if the children chance to dye,
Ere they to age should come,
Their uncle should possesse their wealth,
For so the wille did run.

“ Now, brother,” said the dying man,
“ Look to my children deare ;
Be good unto my boy and girl,
No friendes else have they here :

To God and you I recommend
My children deare this daye,
But little while be sure we have
Within this world to staye.

You must be father and mother both,
And uncle all in one ;
God knowes what will become of them,
When I am dead and gone.”

With that bespake their mother deare :
“ O brother kinde,” quoth shee,
“ You are the man must bring our babes
To wealth or miserie.

And if you keep them carefully,
Then God will you reward ;
But if you otherwise should deal,
God will your deedes regard.”

With lippes as cold as any stone
They kist their children small :
“ God bless you both, my children deare ;”
With that the teares did fall.



These speeches then their brother spake,
To this sicke couple there :
“ The keeping of your children small,
Sweet sister, do not feare ;

God never prosper me nor mine,
Nor aught else that I have,
If I do wrong your children deare,
When you are layd in grave.”

The parents being dead and gone,
The children home he takes,
And brings them straite unto his house,
Where much of them he makes.

He had not kept these pretty babes
A twelvemonth and a daye,
But, for their wealth, he did devise
To make them both awaye.

He bargain'd with two ruffians strong,
Which were of furious mood,
That they should take these children young,
And slaye them in a wood :

And told his wife and all he had,
He did the children send
To be brought up in faire London,
With one that was his friend.

Away then went these pretty babes,
Rejoycing at that tide,
Rejoycing with a merry minde,
They should on cock-horse ride.

They prate and prattle pleasantly,
As they rode on the waye,
To those that should their butchers be,
And work their lives decaye.



So that the pretty speeche they had
 Made murther's heart relent,
And they that undertooke the deed,
 Full sore did now repent.

Yet one of them, more hard of heart,
 Did vowe to do his charge,
Because the wretch, that hired him,
 Had paid him very large.

The other won't agree thereto;
 So here they fell to strife,
With one another they did fight,
 About the children's life :

And he that was of mildest mood,
 Did slaye the other there,
Within an unfrequented wood,
 While babes did quake for feare.

He took the children by the hand,
Teares standing in their eye,
And bad them straitwaye follow him,
And look they did not crye :

And two long miles he ledd them on,
While they for bread complaine ;
“Staye here,” quoth he, “I’ll bring you some,
When I come back againe.”

These pretty babes, with hand in hand,
Went wandering up and downe ;
But never more could see the man
Approaching from the town :

Their prettye lippes with black-berries,
Were all besmear’d and dyed,
And when they sawe the darksome night,
They sat them downe and cryed.



Thus wandered these two little babes,
 Till deathe did end their grief,
 In one another's armes they dyed,
 As babes wanting relief:

No burial this pretty pair
 Of any man receives,
 Till Robin-red-breast painfully
 Did cover them with leaves.

And now the heavy wrathe of God
 Upon their uncle fell ;
 Yea, fearfull fiends did haunt his house,
 His conscience felt an hell :

His barnes were fir'd, his goodes consum'd,
 His landes were barren made,
 His cattle dyed within the field,
 And nothing with him stayd.

And in a voyage to Portugal,
 Two of his sonnes did dye ;
 And to conclude, himselfe was brought
 To want and miserye :

He pawn'd and mortgaged all his land
 Ere seven yeares came about ;
 And now at length this wicked act
 Did by this meanes come out :

The fellowe, that did take in hand
 These children for to kill,
 Was for a robbery judged to dye,
 (Such was God's blessed will ;)

Who did confess the very truth,
 As here hath been display'd :
 Their uncle having dyed in gaol,
 Where he for debt was layd.



You that executors be made,
And overseers eke,
Of children that be fatherless,
And infants mild and meek ;

Take you example by this thing,
And yield to each his right,
Lest God with such like miserye
Your wicked minds requite.



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